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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
3 of 6
PARENTAL ADVISORY

The Night Has Come

AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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Special Thanks to CHUCK VERRILL, MARSHA DEFILIPPO, BRIAN STARK, JIM NAUSEDAS, SANA AMANAT, CHARLIE BECKERMAN, ARUNE SINGH, LAUREN SANKOVITCH and JEFF SUTER.

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Months ago, a flu-like virus swept across the globe, killing off 99% of the planet's population. Now, it's up to the survivors to put the pieces back together--and establish the new world order.

The Boulder Free Zone is populated by those united in cautious hope, drawn to the light and wisdom of Mother Abigail. While in Las Vegas, the Dark Man known as Randall Flagg presides over his followers, rebuilding and preparing for war.

Harold Lauder and Nadine Cross--former Free Zone citizens, secretly loyal to Flagg--have set off a deadly explosion in Boulder and fled to meet their leader in Vegas. But their plans take an unexpected turn when Flagg orchestrates an accident that results in Harold's suicide-death. Then, when Nadine finally meets Flagg, the consummation of their union leaves her pregnant but an empty shell of who she once was.

Meanwhile Tom Cullen--the only spy to survive his reconnaissance mission to Las Vegas--begins his journey homeward to Boulder. Flagg sends out his ethereal "Third Eye" to learn the spy's identity, but Tom continues to elude him. That is, until a tip raises the suspicions of Flagg's right-hand man, Lloyd Henreid. Lloyd reports his suspicions to Flagg, whose initial rage turns to relief that his plans will indeed come to pass.

But then Lloyd receives devastating news: another of the Dark Man's key minions, the pyromaniac Trashcan Man, secretly planted explosives at their military base, Indian Springs. The detonations destroyed two helicopters, killing their side's only pilots and leaving Flagg's military operations in shambles...



**JUST EAST OF THE EISENHOWER TUNNEL,
GLEN, RALPH, LARRY, AND STU:**



... What the hell happened here, Stu?

I don't know, Larry.



The wolves had that poor guy trapped in the car...?

And...he got hungry? And made a break for it?

It was like a dreadful Agatha Christie mystery to unravel: if the wolves had set upon this man, why hadn't he stayed in the car?

With, Larry felt, only one possible answer:

The wolves had been called down from the mountains to kill this man, whoever he was...



And how long must he have waited before starvation sent him out of the Pinto? At least a week...



And, if that was the case, why hadn't the wolves moved on after a day or so? If they were hungry, as well? Too many questions...





Some version of that unsettling thought occurred to each of them, and Glen said:

We shall fear no evil, gentlemen.

Let's keep moving.



They went into the Eisenhower Tunnel roped together.



And in that horrible blackness... Larry's mind returned to his trip through the Lincoln Tunnel. Only now it wasn't images of Rita Blakemoor that haunted his mind--



--but the anguished face of...the Wolfman, Larry dubbed him. Forever frozen in its final snarl as he and the wolf killed each other.



On the other side of the tunnel, Larry thought: he'd been going west, probably to join the Dark Men, but I wouldn't wish that death on anyone...

He hoped that the Wolfman would be the most gruesome sight of their journey.

THE NEXT DAY:

So...

...I guess
Harold's dead.

It appears
that way.



The buzzards had picked him over pretty well, but Harold still clutched his notebook; the .38 was still jammed in his mouth like a grotesque lollipop...



They weren't going to bury him, but Stu wanted to take the gun out of his mouth, at least. Read whatever dying declaration (if any) he'd made.

What a waste.



Seeing how efficiently the Park Man had destroyed Harold and how carelessly he had thrown him aside when his part was played out made Stu hate Flagg all the more...

Better to
keep moving,
Stu.



Even if they were on some witless sort of children's crusade, Stu wanted, more than ever, to pay Flagg back for Nick and Susan and now Harold, too...

You'll want to watch out, he thought grimly. You'll want to look out in case I get within choking distance of you, freak...



LAS VEGAS; RANDALL FLAGG.

The sun would be going down in an hour, the retard would be on the move again, and Flagg... Flagg needed to catch him.

Why, though? The rationality of it eluded him. Unless it were as simple as:

It's what I want, and I am going to have what I want, and that is reason enough...

He could be in Boulder in five days--with tanks, flametracks, armored trucks, the works--except...

If there is snow in the mountain passes...

...except, good weather was no longer a sure bet.

The truth was, Flagg was nervous. About the retard Cullen, yes, but also...the Trashcan Man.

Who had succeeded in doing what the entire Free Zone could not have done.

By bombing half of Indian Springs, he had thrown a wrench in the foolproof machinery of the Park Man's conquest. And how had that happened?

I... misjudged.

But he was still the strongest man in America, wasn't he?

There might be another like him in Russia or China or Iran, but that was a problem for ten years from now--wasn't it?

He decided to levitate.

That always made him
feel better, stronger,
more serene. It
cleared his head.

I am,
I am, I am,
I AM--

His boot heels started
to rise *off* the surface
of the sundeck--

They're
coming for you,
you know.

--then crashed back
down at the sound of
the soft, uninflected
voice behind him.

She looked like
some pallid,
deranged sibyl:

Nadine?
Darling?

They're coming.
Stu Redman, Glen
Bateman, Ralph
Brentner. And...Larry
Underwood. They're
coming and they'll
strangle you like a
chicken-killing
weasel.



They're afraid because the balance of power is shifting on its arm...They're leaving their posts in the dead of night and *your* Eye doesn't see them...but I do...



The ones who stay behind...? They won't lift a *finger* to save you when the men come from the East to finish you once and for all--

You...



LIE!!!

Flagg slammed both his fists down on Nadine's shoulders, shattering her collarbones--



Then he lifted her over his head--

YOU-!



And threw her off the building--

LIE!!!





As Nadine fell, Flagg saw the great smile of triumph and relief on her face, the sudden sanity in her eyes...and understood.

She had baited him into doing it, knowing that only he could set her free, and--



--and she was carrying his child!

NO.



Nadine fell as silently as a defective skyrocket.

She didn't scream, not once.



NOOOOO!!!

Though Flagg--when he heard the indescribable thud of her hard landing--howled into the sky:

It makes no difference, his mind screamed. No difference at all!



But it did.

And later, when he tried to levitate again, it was a long, long time before his bootheels left the sidewalk, and they would only hover a quarter-inch above the ground, no higher.

**INTERLUDE.
THE DESERT.**

*Oh, how history repeats itself.
The Trashcan Man was once
again being broiled alive in
the devil's frying pan.*

*But this time, it was what he
deserved, for what he'd done
at Indian Springs. No more
than what he deserved.*



*He had thrown away his red-flawed
amulet from Flagg. He wasn't worthy
enough to wear it. He was an imperfect
devil, and as such, he'd cast himself
out--banished himself.*

*He could barely remember why
he'd done what he did. He'd been
stung by a scorpion--had that
made him crazy? (Crazier?)*

*Had that made him hear
things that his friends at
Indian Springs couldn't
possibly have said?*

*People who
play with fire
wet the bed,
Trash.*

*Hey, Trashcan
Man, I heard
you snort Ronson
lighter fluid,
that true?*

*Hey, Trashy,
what did old
Lady Semple say
when you torched
her pension
check?*



*It was the desert heat;
it had fried his brain--
And the scorpion's
poison, too--*

*Wh-why you
asking me about
old Lady Semple's
pension check?*

*He knew it couldn't
be real; he knew he
didn't have to do
anything crazy--*



*But oh, the lovely
explosions...*

*And oh,
the fire...*

Yesss...





So he set his bombs
and threw his new
life away.

And now he was driving through
the desert--the temperature
hovering at a hundred degrees--
looking for something...

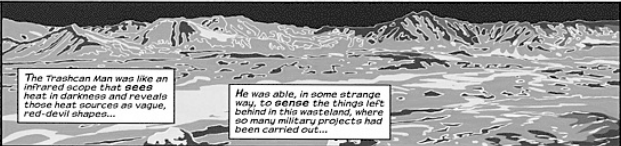


REDEMPTION.

If he found some special weapon,
some special gift, and brought it
back to the Park Man in Las Vegas,
might it not be possible...?



The Trashcan Man was like an
infrared scope that sees
heat in darkness and reveals
those heat sources as vague,
red-devil shapes...



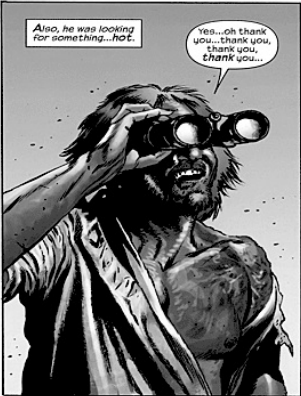
He was able, in some strange
way, to sense the things left
behind in this wasteland, where
so many military projects had
been carried out...

He could've, for instance,
driven straight to Project
Blue, where the whole thing
had begun, but...



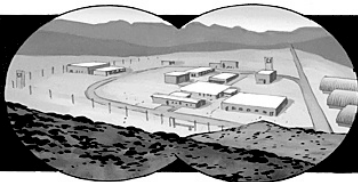
No, cold plague was not
to his taste. (Nor did he
think it would be to
Flagg's taste, either.)

Also, he was looking
for something...hot.



Yes...oh thank
you...thank you,
thank you,
thank you...

Nellis Air Force
Range.



His special sense had led him to it, as though he'd known it was exactly here, all along...

Trashy wandered the base until he found the tell-tale signs he'd been looking for, laughing and clapping his hands like a little child when he did.

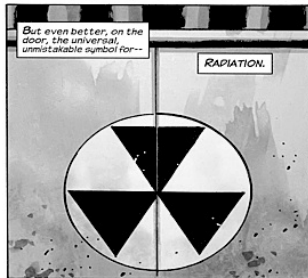


A poster with a clear message.



But even better, on the door, the universal, unmistakable symbol for--

RADIATION.



Trashy knew: inside this building, he would find what he needed.

That thing which would make him worthy again; that would make up for Indian Springs.



Right before he vanished into the darkness, he whispered:

My life
for you...



END INTERLUDE.

SEPTEMBER 17, NEAR MIDNIGHT.

The stars in the desert sky
were cold fire, witch light.

Beneath them, Randall
Flagg was letting all his
thoughts slip away... He
was joining the night...

Becoming the crow,
the wolf, the weasel,
the strutting
trapdoor spider...



He sent out his Eye.
(Whatever else had
happened, the Eye had
not deserted him...)

Nadine's words haunting him:
They're coming...they're
almost in Utah now...



The Eye was like a deadly
poison arrow, slipping
through the desert air...



Looking down on the towns huddled along
I-70, deserted except for the animals that
had begun to creep in from the forests
as the scent of man washed away...

They were towns with names like
Freemont, and Green River, and
Sego, and Thompson, and Harley
Pome, and Great Junction, and--



--the Eye stopped, just east of Grand Junction, hovering over the spark of a campfire...

Four figures, sleeping around a dying fire.



Nadine had told the truth, then. For reasons Flagg could not fathom, they were--

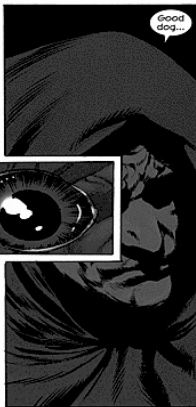
GERRRRRRRRRRRROWWWWWW



The Eye turned to stare at the dog; the dog, unafraid, stared back.



RRRRRRRR



Good dog...

GER-GRRR...



Kojak...? What is it, boy?

Is someone there?

The Park Man had seen enough. He called the Park Eye back to himself--

It flew through the silent, rushing darkness--

Until, some unknown time later, he was looking down at himself--

Then there was a curious sensation of vertigo, of two things merging into one--

Then the Eye was gone and there were only his eyes, staring at the cold, gleaming stars...

So they were coming, then. Probably at the old woman's behest...

Wrapped in righteousness like missionaries approaching the cannibals' village...

Seeing them, he felt he'd been wrong to panic. It was going to be lovely...

...and oh, so easy.

Doubts would end; fears would end, All it would take was the sight of Four heads up on spikes in front of the MGM Grand.

He would assemble every person in Vegas and make them file past and look...

He would have photographs taken; would have flyers printed and sent out across the land...

Flagg smiled... Five heads; he would stick the dog's head up on a pole, too.

Oh,
yes...

Tomorrow morning, he would put out the word. They were no longer looking for one man, Tom Cullen, going east...

...but four men--and a dog--going west.

And they were to be taken alive, at all costs.



Since coming upon Harold, the foursome's march west had been steady and, for the most part, unremarkable. Through cold rains and colder nights. Through towns with names like Loma, Sego, Green River...

BOULDER TO VEGAS - 771 MILES

Date	Miles	Total Miles
September 6	28-1	28-1
September 7	27-0	55-1
September 8	34-5	89-6
September 9	28-2	104-8
September 10	27-4	132-2
September 11	29-1	161-3
September 12	28-8	190-1
September 13	29-5	219-6
September 14	32-0	251-6
September 15	31-6	283-2
September 16	33-5	316-7
September 17	37-2	353-9

They had left the east--and the summer--far behind them. They were in a part of the country with no towns; they were in his country now...

The night they camped just east of Green River, the twenty-second of September, there was a dust of snow in the early morning hours...

SEPTEMBER 23

They came to the washout at a little past noon.

A thirty-foot slab of I-70 had been swept away, maybe by a flash flood, leaving behind a gully that was fifty feet deep, with banks of crumbly, rubbly soil and sedimentary rock.

They looked around them, taking in the landscape, which was now beginning to be dotted with strange, wind-carved pillars and monoliths...

One chunk stuck up towards the racing sky like an apocalyptic finger...

Finally, Ralph said:

Holy crow. Someone ought to call the Utah State Highway Department about this.

Can you make it down, Glen?

Yeah, I think so. The arthritis isn't too bad right now.

It's like Mars out here...



In fact, they all made it down--Kojak leading the way, nimbly-- though the ground shifted under their feet, starting little slides of rock and dirt, each step they took.



At the bottom:

We can walk upstream and find a shallower bank, maybe.

And lose the rest of the day? When I was a kid, I could have gone up there in forty seconds and registered a pulse-rate under seventy at the top.

You're no kid now, Glen.

Kojak led the way, again. Then Larry, then Glen, then Ralph (climbing as steady as a mountain goat, Stu noted). Stu was last.

He was thinking that the slope was much easier to manage going up than it was down...

...right at the moment he felt the outcropping beneath his foot disappear--

Time seemed to stop--

Larry reached for Stu, but their hands missed--

For a moment, Stu felt (insanely) like Wile E. Coyote--

On his way down, Stu's knee struck something and there was a sudden bolt of pain--

He did a backwards somersault--

Took in a mouthful of dirt--

Sharp pebbles scrawled bloody scratches across his face and arms--

He came down on his lower leg at a sickening angle--

Heard it snap--

Felt sudden white fire--

Stu--?
Stu?!

Hang on,
I'm--

I'm
coming--

Larry!
For God's
sake--

Careful--
careful!

Broken, he thought.
In two places, at
least. Maybe more.
And his knee was
sprung.

Oh...

SHITTTT!!!

Ralph and Glen splinted the leg. Glen produced a bottle of "arthritis" pills and made Stu take one.

Stu didn't know what was in the pill, exactly, but the pain in his leg had faded to a faraway drone...

It dawned on Stu, not unpleasantly, that they were all living on borrowed time. Not just because they were on their way to see Flagg, but because they had survived Captain Trips in the first place...

Dimly, Stu heard his three friends discussing something...

Debating options...

...go back, find a car...

...not treating him like a horse...

...supposed to be his friend...

No--

No backtracking... No car... Remember what Mother said... Against the rules of the game...

This isn't a damn game, Stu. If we leave you, you'll die here.

Larry...you're almost surely gonna die in Nevada... Now...get going. You've got another four hours of daylight left, don't waste them...







Glen went next.

It occurred to Stu that when he first met Glen, painting a mediocre picture beside that road in New Hampshire, Glen's hair had still been salt-and-pepper.

Goodbye, East Texas. It's been pretty damn good to know you.

Yeah, but... it's not so long.

I feel that... don't you?



Don't say goodbye, Glen. Make it so long, it's better luck.

Yeah, but... it's not so long.

I feel that... don't you?

And because he did, Stu looked Glen right in the eye and said:

Yeah, but... I will fear no evil, right?



Glen pressed the bottle of pills into Stu's hand and whispered to him that they were morphine based. That three or four taken together would be lethal.

Pull the plug if you have to, Stuart. Don't screw around, friend.

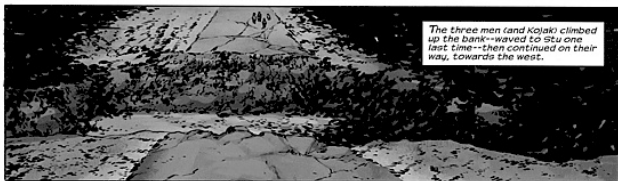
I won't.



Goodbye, then.

Goodbye, Baldy.





And never saw Stu Redman again.



CONTINUED!

The Making of This Issue's Cover

From: Nicole Boose
To: Tomm Coker, Ralph Nacchio, Laura Martin, Mike Perkins, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Sent: Tuesday, June 21, 2011 9:49 PM
Subject: Stand #3 cover

Hi Tomm,
The feedback we're getting on the sketch is that it needs to be more dramatic and less tame. If you want to go back to the other options that came up, I realized that a variation on this same cover suggestion involved the characters walking toward the camera in the daytime.

Unused Cover Sketch For This Issue

ILLUSTRATION QUALITY

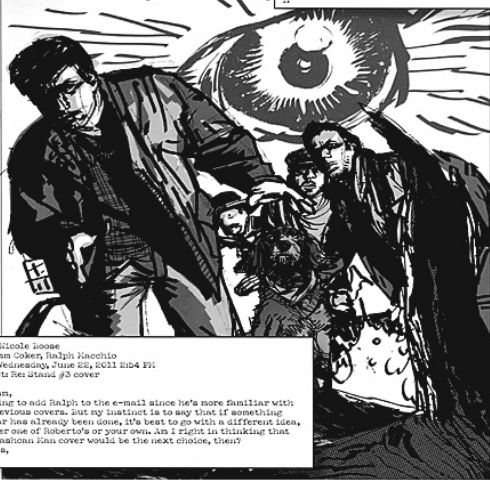
PRINTS
AT 60%
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From: Tomm Coker
To: Nicole Boose
Sent: Wed, June 22, 2011 10:53:19 AM
Subject: Re: Stand #3 cover

We did a cover just a few months ago of the guys walking towards the camera with Abigail floating above them. Is this idea too similar?

I'll give it another shot today. Is there any current ref on Trashcan Man?

T.



From: Nicole Boose
To: Tomm Coker, Ralph Nacchio
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2011 2:54 PM
Subject: Re: Stand #3 cover

Hi Tomm,
I'm going to add Ralph to the e-mail since he's more familiar with the previous covers. But my instinct is to say that if something similar has already been done, it's best to go with a different idea, whether one of Roberto's or your own. Am I right in thinking that the Trashcan Man cover would be the next choice, then?
Thanks,
Nicole

2 5 TITLE # MONTH

ARTIST Tomm Coker

WOLFE
BOOKS
M.

Approved Cover Sketch

From: Tomm Coker
 To: Ralph Macchio, Laura Martin, Nicole Boose, Mike Perkins,
 Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
 Sent: Monday, June 27, 2011 6:13 PM
 Subject: STANDNITE003_RUF...

If everyone is okay with the sketch and you can get it approved I will knock it out ASAP.

Hope all is well.

T.

From: Nicole Boose
 To: Tomm Coker, Ralph Macchio, Laura Martin, Mike Perkins,
 Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
 Sent: Tuesday, June 28, 2011 1:46 PM
 Subject: Re: STANDNITE003_RUF...

Hi Tomm,
 We're good to go with this cover==thanks for your patience.



Original Cover Art

From: Tomm Coker
 To: Ralph Macchio, Laura Martin, Nicole Boose, Mike
 Perkins, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
 Sent: Thursday, June 30, 2011 3:13 AM
 Subject: STANDNITE003_COV

Here's a jpg. I'm sending the cover now to Laura. If you have notes let me know. If not let me know and I'll upload it to the ftp.

Goodnight.

T.

From: Nicole Boose
 To: Tomm Coker, Ralph Macchio
 Cc: Laura Martin
 Sent: Thu, Jun 30, 2011 11:00 am
 Subject: Re: STANDNITE003_COV

Hi Tomm,
 Here are my thoughts, which you're welcome to take or leave: Trashy comes across to me a little less menacing in this final version than he did in the sketch. While his expression in the sketch looked nicely crazed and averted, the final strikes me a little more like he's mugging for the camera. Also, his hand position in the final looks a little more vague to me in this version; it's not quite as clear to me whether he's reaching for something or about to drop something.

If those things are too time-consuming to change, or if you feel strongly otherwise, we're good to go as is. But if you want it, you do have another day or so. Just let me know either way so we can give Laura the green light.
 Thanks!
 Nicole



From: Tomm Coker
To: Ralph Kacchio, Laura Martin, Nicole Boose,
Mike Perkins, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Sent: Monday, July 4, 2011 10:15 PM
Subject: sSTANDNITE003_COV_3...

Having the extra day really helped. Good notes too. I've sent it to Laura. Let me know if I should upload to ftp.

Happy 4th!

T.

Final Cover Art

COVERS - ILLUSTRATION QUALITY



From: Mike Perkins
To: Tomm Coker, Ralph Kacchio, Laura Martin,
Nicole Boose, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Sent: Tue, July 5, 2011 5:49:46 AM
Subject: Re: sSTANDNITE003_COV_3...

LOVELY WORK! Loving Undying Love, by the way. Both gorgeous and intriguing.



From: Nicole Boose
To: Mike Perkins, Tomm Coker, Ralph Kacchio, Laura Martin,
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Sent: Tuesday, July 5, 2011 7:10 AM
Subject: Re: sSTANDNITE003_COV_3...

Oh, I love that expression! Haunting and scary, but also a little bit sad, just like our Trashy. Glad the notes were useful, too. Thanks!

8 8

TITLE

ARTIST Tomm Coker

MCMM

MCMM

From: Tomm Coker
To: Mike Perkins, Ralph Kacchio, Laura Martin, Nicole Boose,
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Sent: Tuesday, July 5, 2011 9:58 AM
Subject: Re: sSTANDNITE003_COV_3...

Gorgeous and intriguing -- that's what I have on my business cards.

SCRIPT TO FINAL

PAGE FOUR.

PANEL ONE.

Looking at Randall Flagg, as he stands on the roof deck of his hotel, hands on the railing, looking out at the rest of Vegas—at the desert. A dry, desert wind is blowing strong, ruffling Flagg's long hair. He is looking East; it's an hour before sundown, so that should be reflected in the color of the sky, Laura. He's in one of his contemplative mood. Slightly on edge, slightly worried.

FLOATING TEXT: LAS VEGAS; RANDALL FLAGG.

CAPTION: The sun would be going down in an hour, the retard would be on the move again, and Flagg... Flagg needed to catch him.

CAPTION: Why, though? The rationality of it eluded him. Unless it were as simple as:

FLAGG: It's what I want, and I am going to have what I want, and that is reason enough...

PANEL TWO.

Staying on Flagg, but moving in for more of a close-up on him, Mike. The camera tracking around him. Talking (mumbling) to himself. Making excuses, as if he were afraid...

CAPTION: He could be in Boulder in five days—with tanks, flametracks, armored trucks, the works—except...

FLAGG: If there is snow in the mountain passes...

CAPTION: ...except, good weather was no longer a sure bet.

PANEL THREE.

Continuing this beat. Flagg's head, on the left-hand side of the panel. Two half-toned, comic book-y images on the right-hand side of the panel: Tom Cullen and Trashy, from the shoulders-up—they're what Flagg's thinking about...

CAPTION: The truth was, Flagg was nervous. About the retard Cullen, yes, but also...the Trashcan Man.

CAPTION: Who had succeeded in doing what the entire Free Zone could not have done.

PANEL FOUR.

Continuous, but now the comic book-y image is on the left-hand side of the panel. A long-shot that shows us: Trashy, standing with his back towards us, the readers, in silhouette, looking at some of the burning, exploded oil tanks out at Indian Springs. On the right-hand side of the panel, Flagg's head (in reality), looking out at the desert, shaking his head ever so slightly, admitting something unsettling to himself...

CAPTION: By bombing half of Indian Springs, he had thrown a wrench in the foolproof machinery of the Dark Man's conquest. And how had that happened?

FLAGG: I...misjudged.

PANEL FIVE.

Continuous. Now we're looking at Flagg, front and center; the "camera" hovering ten yards in front of him. He is leaning forward, hands clutching the rail, out in front of him, head half-bowed...

CAPTION: But he was still the strongest man in America, wasn't he?

CAPTION: There might be another like him in Russia or China or Iran, but that was a problem for ten years from now—wasn't it?

CAPTION: He decided to levitate.



PAGE FIVE.

PANEL ONE.

A close-up on Flagg; his face—especially the lower-half of his face, his mouth—filling this small, narrow panel. He is whispering an incantation...

CAPTION: That always made him feel better, stronger, more serene. It cleared his head.

FLAGG: I am, I am, I am, I AM—

PANEL TWO.

Another small, narrow panel, focusing on Flagg's feet—in his signature boots, which have started to—ever so gingerly—rise off the roof deck...

CAPTION: His boot heels started to rise off the surface of the sundeck—



PANEL THREE.

A close-up on Flagg's head, on the right-hand side of the panel, all blessed-out, eyes closed, the moment before the spell is broken—by the off-panel interruption (someone calling to Flagg from behind him) we hear but don't see in this panel.

DIALOGUE BALLOON: They're coming for you, you know.

PANEL FOUR.

Another close-up on Flagg's boots, which have stumbled/twisted back down to the roof deck—awkwardly, as if Flagg were almost twisting his ankles... (Again, the spell's been broken.)

CAPTION: —then crashed back down at the sound of the soft, uninflected voice behind him.



PANEL FIVE.

A variation on Panel Three, except that Flagg's head has whipped around so he can see what's behind him. He's been surprised, and not in a good way—though he is, as always, trying to cover that.

FLAGG: Nadine? Darling?

PANEL SIX.

The page's biggest panel by far, Mike. From Flagg's POV, we're looking at Nadine, walking out on to the roof deck from some doorway. And Stephen's description of this moment is so cool, let's try to recreate it as much as possible, Mike. But her hair's all white, and she's wearing a very billowy, light, almost transparent white dress that is undulating all around her in the desert wind. It's almost like a Todd McFarlane cape, if you know what I mean. She looks like a ghost. She looks like doom.

CAPTION: She looked like some pallid, deranged sibyl:

NADINE: They're coming. Stu Redman. Glen Bateman. Ralph Brentner. And...Larry Underwood. They're coming and they'll kill you like a chicken-killing weasel.



PAGE SIX.

PANEL ONE.

Pulling back so that we see both of our players in this panel, Mike, in profile; Nadine, ghost-like, on the left-hand side of the panel, walking towards Flagg, on the right-hand side of the panel, standing his ground, emphatically gesturing to Nadine, like a stern father...

NADINE: They'll stamp you out like a disease.

NADINE: They're...almost in Utah now.

FLAGG: They're in Boulder, Nadine. Hiding under their beds.

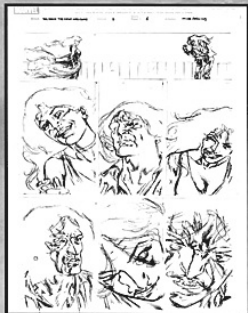
FLAGG: Now go downstairs.

PANEL TWO.

A close-up on Nadine, looking at her from the off-panel Flagg's POV. And she is terrifying, Mike. Completely deranged, smiling, giggling like a maniac... Talking in that sing-song-y voice. Like she's lost her mind—or has finally started to regain it. Looney tunes, but also...somehow...sane, and in complete control of what she's doing.

NADINE: I'll go down...and so will you.

NADINE: We'll both go dow-ownnnnn...



PANEL THREE.

A quick cut back to Flagg. (A small, narrow panel.) Anger all over his expression. And perhaps some fear, too.

FLAGG: They're in Boulder—

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Nadine, from Flagg's POV. Her face/head getting bigger in the panel as she continues her slow, steady march towards Flagg...

NADINE: Everything you built here is falling apart. People are whispering about you. They're saying you let Tom Cullen get away. Just a simple retarded boy, but smart enough to outwit the mighty Randall Flagg.

PANEL FIVE.

Another shot of Flagg, getting more and more agitated. Angier. More on the edge.

FLAGG: You lie.



PANEL SIX.

Back to Nadine—more of a close-up on her. She is worming her way into Flagg's psyche. Poking at him like a monkey jabbing at a fire with a stick.

NADINE: They're saying your weapons expert has gone crazy and you didn't know it was going to happen. They're afraid that what he brings back from the desert next time will be for them, not the people in the East.

PANEL SEVEN.

One last cut back to Flagg—the tightest close-up on him. He's about to break, snap.

FLAGG: Shut up—



PAGE SEVEN.

PANEL ONE.

Focusing on Nadine, looking at her from, say, the knees-up. Her dress parachuting around her. Her hands clasped in front of her, calmly. She is speaking methodically. Again, as though she knows exactly what she's doing...

NADINE: They're afraid because the balance of power is shifting on its arm... They're leaving their posts in the dead of night and your Eye doesn't see them... But I do...

PANEL TWO.

Shifting back to Flagg. His hands clenched into fists; he's holding them in front of him, shaking with rage. He is boiling over, about to explode...

NADINE: The ones who stay behind...? They won't lift a finger to save you when the men come from the East to finish you once and for all--

FLAGG: You...



PANEL THREE.

A shot that includes both of our players, Mike. A sudden, brutal show of violence as (as the caption tells us) Flagg slams his fists down on Nadine, knocking her down like a rag doll. (I'll leave it to you, Mike, to figure out the best moment to be capturing here. The most dramatic, disturbing, powerful moment, as only you know how to do it...)

CAPTION: ...LIE!!

CAPTION: Flagg slammed both his fists down on Nadine's shoulders, shattering her collarbones--

PANEL FOUR.

The camera is a bit raised, behind Flagg, looking as he holds Nadine, Frankenstein-style, above his head. **NOTE:** Though we may see her face in this panel--and certainly the damage Flagg has done to her bones and body--Flagg is turned away from us, the readers, towards the edge of the building, towards the roof deck's railing, as though he were about to hurl her off (which he is).

CAPTION: Then he lifted her over his head--

FLAGG: YOU--!

PANEL FIVE.

Now we're beneath Flagg and Nadine, looking up at them. Nadine, closer to us, of course, because she's plummeting down towards us. Flagg, more in the background, looking down at his handiwork.

CAPTION: And threw her off the building--

FLAGG: "--LIE!!"



PAGE EIGHT.

PANEL ONE.

This is it, the end of Nadine, so let's give her a panel that's as beautiful as it is chilling, Mike. We're looking down on her, as she falls from the building; her body is turning in mid-air, pin-wheeling; at this moment, she's looking up at us—at the off-panel Flagg—and she's smiling, content, released, free. Her shoulders may be broken (and they are, red stains blossoming where her collar bones once were), but her spirit is very much alive... Again, his diaphanous dress flutters all around her, as the air rushes around her... The street/sidewalk in the deep distance.

CAPTION: As Nadine fell, Flagg saw the great smile of triumph and relief on her face, the sudden sanity in her eyes... and understood.

CAPTION: She had baited him into doing it, knowing that only he could set her free, and—

PANEL TWO.

Looking up at Flagg; the camera's just beneath him. He is leaning over the railing, eyes wide, reaching down for Nadine (futilely, of course). Just the latest instance of things going horribly wrong. He wants to take it back, but of course he can't—A moment of utter horror, frozen in time—

CAPTION: —and she was carrying his child!

FLAGG: (whisper of realization) No.

PANEL THREE.

Pulling back for a shot of Nadine—the last image we'll see of her. (If we see her face, Mike—and I defer to you on what you want to show us, I could see it going either way, actually—her eyes are closed, she is completely at peace with her fate. Delighted, in fact. And again, someone is denying Flagg his victory.

CAPTION: Nadine fell as silently as a defective skyrocket.

CAPTION: She didn't scream, not once.

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Flagg; the camera at chest-level. He has arched his back and thrown his head back. And he is howling into the darkening sky, spittle flying from his mouth. The deepest, most anguished cry we've ever seen him give in this series...

CAPTION: Though Flagg—when he heard the indescribable thud of her hard landing—howled into the sky:

FLAGG: NOOOOOO!!!

CAPTION: It makes no difference, his mind screamed. No difference at all!

PANEL FIVE.

A grace-note to end this sequence, Mike. A couple of options: We're looking at Flagg's feet again, and they are just barely levitating about the roof deck. Or, we're right above Flagg, looking down at him so that we have a Salvador Dali-esque perspective on the scene. His arms are extended out at either side. His head's tilted upwards, so we see his face clearly. His eyes are closed, and from his expression, we can tell he's straining, straining to levitate even the little bit he's managing... (It's not a comforting sight, in other words.)

CAPTION: But it did.

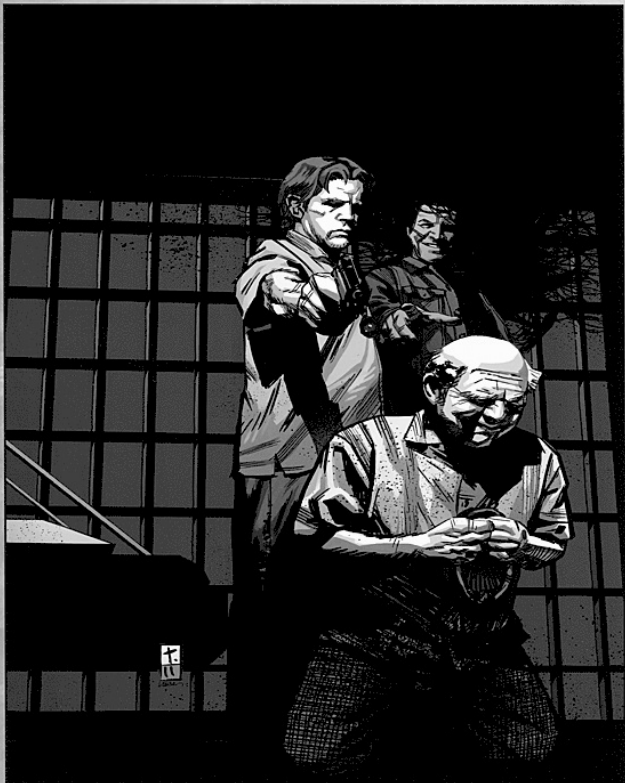
CAPTION: And later, when he tried to levitate again, it was a long, long time before his boot heels left the sundeck, and they would only hover a quarter inch above the ground, no higher.



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